

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of October 12, 2021**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse (absent), and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laura Hill-Eubanks (Chair, Planning Commission), Deborah Zuaro (Chair, Conservation Commission), Lydia Petty (Northfield Ridge + River Routes Steering Committee), Kahwa Douoguih (NCDN), Kaitlyn Keating (NCDN), Anne Sternberg, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Laura Hill-Eubanks, Planning Commission (PC) Chair: Planning Grant Application.** Ms. Hill-Eubanks informed the Select Board members that the PC intends to submit a grant application in order to obtain the funding to hire a planning consultant. That person would assist the PC members in revising the local zoning regulations to better conform with state law and the recently revised Northfield Town Plan. The maximum grant amount is \$22,000 and the municipality would be expected to provide a ten percent (10%) local match. The revision process is expected to last between one (1) and two (2) years. Given the local match amount, the Select Board members need to authorize and sign the grant application resolution before it can be submitted to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. There is a November 1, 2021 grant application deadline. As this is an action item, this matter is also listed later on the meeting agenda under "Select Board."
- b. Lydia Petty, Northfield Ridge + River Routes (NRRR) Steering Committee: Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Letter of Interest.** Manager Schulz received an email late Friday afternoon (10/08/21) from the VOREC Program Manager indicating that the preliminary grant application submitted by NRRR was selected from the 104 original applicants to reach the next round. The remaining thirty-seven (37) applicants will be asked to submit a full grant application. Deborah Zuaro is the Chair of the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) and she has worked with Manager Schulz, other NCC members, the Town Forest Stewardship Committee, and the NRRR Steering Committee on the initial application. She added that up to twenty-five (25) grants will be awarded and the minimum request amount is \$50,000 with no local match amount. The application deadline is November 22, 2021 and if there are no objections, Ms. Zuaro and Ms. Petty will continue to work with Manager Schulz on the final grant application submission. Ms. Petty said the grant application was based on goals contained in the Town Forest Stewardship Plan and the NRRR Master Plan. Should the grant application prove successful, the funds would be spent on Town Forest trail improvements, new signage, improved access, etc. Another possibility would be a pilot program through which novice hikers would be able to borrow equipment, such as snowshoes, from a repository at the Brown Public Library. Although there is no local match, Ms. Petty felt an offer of in-kind services from the municipality might improve the application's chance of success.

Board member Miller is supportive of this grant application and asked when the grant awards would be announced. Ms. Petty said the awards would be announced in January 2022 and the funds distributed in April 2022. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Zuaro, Ms. Petty, and all others involved in this effort for their work on this. He asked if a project budget has been developed. Ms. Petty said there has been some preliminary number-crunching in order to determine the grant amount to be requested. This is now set at \$158,000 but that might change when a firmer budget is put together. There also will be a need to prioritize project goals in case the full grant request is not awarded. Chair Maxwell said it appears a lot of planning for this grant application has already taken place. In addition, assistance from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) resulted in the Northfield Town Forest Access Feasibility Study, which included three (3) Community Site Visits, a Community Forum, and public feedback through an online survey. Ms. Petty asked if she and Ms. Zuaro should provide the Select Board members with an in-person update before the final application is submitted. Chair Maxwell said that was not necessary as they will be working with Manager Schulz and he himself can provide reports to the Select Board members.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **September 28, 2021 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #07-22.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #07-22 in the amount of \$680,894.39. Board member Stevens is pleased not to see any repair bills related to the 2014 police cruiser. Manager Schulz confirmed it is running well at this time. Chair Maxwell noted this warrant contained a number of bond payments as well as payments associated with various infrastructure projects. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 3, 2021.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$110,084.74. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Northfield Transfer Station Agreement.** As Board member Morse is not present tonight and he previously submitted by email a number of proposed amendments to this agreement, Chair Maxwell suggested tabling discussion of this matter until the next regular meeting (10/26/21). There was no objection.
- b. **Discontinuance of Class 3 Town Highway – Bellemore Road.** Anne Sternberg and her husband Paul purchased their house on Bellemore Road earlier this year. This is a one-house Class 3 road located off Onion River Road just south of where Onion River turns into a Class 4 road as it crosses over into the Town of Berlin. Ms. Sternberg recently sent a letter to the municipality asking that Bellemore Road be discontinued for several reasons, most especially the safety of their children, pets, and farm animals. Ms. Sternberg said several motorists have been deceived by satnav and GPS instructions into thinking the class 4 section of Onion River Road can be used in wintertime to access the Berlin Pond area. Some have gotten stuck in their driveway when they assumed that was a continuation of the road. In summertime, motorists sometimes drive too fast into their driveway, which also is a significant danger to the family. In addition, Ms. Sternberg believes Bellemore Road is too narrow for the municipal highway's plowing trucks, which has resulted in property damage in the past. Another reason for privatizing the road would be to allow for more privacy for the family since buying a home on the backroads was meant to provide this. However, lost and/or curious drivers currently enter their driveway at all hours of the day and they would like this stopped by designating this as a private road.

Manager Schulz said he and Highway Foreman Trent Tucker have reviewed the situation and see no reason for not granting the Sternbergs' request. If the Select Board members agree, the process for road discontinuance can start, which would include notices to abutting property owners as well as scheduling a site visit and public hearing. Should the Select Board members approve the discontinuance, there would be a forty-five (45) day appeal period before the road is privatized. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) would be informed that the amount of Class 3 road in Northfield has been lessened by the length of Bellemore Road, which is about one-tenth of a mile. Board member Miller has no objections as the homeowners have made a very compelling case for this road discontinuance. Board member Stevens asked where the plow trucks on Onion River Road would turn around. Manager Schulz said Mr. Tucker indicated this would not be a problem as there is sufficient room in the municipality's right-of-way. Board member Goodrich believes the request is well-founded and noted this particular road was one of fifteen (15) considered for discontinuance three (3) years ago. Board member Goodrich believes the Select Board should allow the process to move forward. Chair Maxwell asked about the timeline for the process. Manager Schulz said it should take several months as there are various notification periods before it goes into effect. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize Manager Schulz to move forward with the process of discontinuing Bellemore Road. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- c. **Planning Grant Resolution - Zoning Bylaw Update Planning Grant.** As indicated earlier tonight, the Planning Commission would like Select Board authorization to apply for a planning grant in order to hire a consultant to assist with the revision of Northfield's zoning regulations. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve and sign the FY22 Municipal Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Project Funding.** Manager Schulz recently attended an ANR webinar in which there was discussion of the amount of federal and state funds available for local water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure projects. The ANR is focusing on projects that would: eliminate any remaining CSOs (Combined Sewer Overflows); control phosphorus pollution; improve water/sewer infrastructure in mobile home parks; enable economic development with up-to-date wastewater treatment facilities; help homeowners with installing new or replacing failing private septic systems; and improving water and wastewater systems in Vermont's designated villages. In the case of Northfield, these priorities dovetail with the proposed project that focuses on improving stormwater treatment along South Main Street (and side streets) in conjunction with the elimination of the community's last remaining CSO. The indication is that ANR will provide one hundred percent (100%) funding for this project, which has been budgeted at \$950,000. The engineering plans are at the ninety percent (90%) completion level so this project can be considered "shovel ready." Manager Schulz has submitted the required documentation to ANR, which will announce early next year which projects will be funded in the next fiscal year. He believes the funding for this project will be coming to Northfield but it is uncertain what the timing will be (FY22, FY23, FY24, or FY25?). Manager Schulz now will look for other possible outside funding for updating the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility as well as other local infrastructure projects. He feels this could be a very exciting time as federal and state money now is available for several projects that were previously delayed due to lack of local resources

- b. **Northfield Common Fountain.** Manager Schulz met today with Northfield resident Bonnie Chouinard and she indicated her willingness to totally fund the rebuilding/replacement of the public fountain on the Common. She also provided some examples of public fountains in other communities to show what options exist. Manager Schulz will provide more information to the Select Board members as this possibility develops.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Community Banners.** Board member Stevens noted the banners designed and painted by local students have been installed on the Common and on the Main Street Bridge. He wanted to thank all those responsible for their creation as well as the municipal employees who installed them. Board member Stevens asked how long they would stay in place. Manager Schulz said they probably would be removed in early December in order to prevent winter damage. The other Select Board members also expressed their gratitude for the banners. (NOTE: An article in the October 14, 2021 edition of the *Times Argus* listed the individuals responsible as Eric Howard, the Northfield tenth-grade art class, Jon Ignatowski, Jeff Schulz, Andrea Melville, Carolyn Stevens, Bonnie Kirn Donahue, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, Ada Eberle, Tim Swartz, Jeanne Bright, Colin, Warren, and Ryan Bright.)
- b. **Northfield Farmers Market.** Board member Stevens noted the final outside market of the summer season was held this afternoon. Board member Goodrich thanked Cassie Morse for her excellent job managing the market. Chair Maxwell also expressed his appreciation to Ms. Morse and the Northfield Farmers Market vendors for another successful year of operation and service to the community.
- c. **Special Select Board Meeting.** Chair Maxwell said the Select Board would be holding a special meeting next Tuesday night (10/19/21) at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room. The sole topic will be the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which will provide \$1,900,000 in federal COVID-19 local recovery funds to the Town of Northfield. Chair Maxwell would like to start a public conversation regarding how these funds should be spent as well as inform the public of the type of local projects that would (or would not) be eligible for usage of these funds.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Kahwa Douoguih, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN).** The NCDN was instrumental in helping create the Economic Development Director (EDD) position and also assisted with the search that hired Jon Ignatowski as the first Northfield EDD. Unfortunately, Mr. Ignatowski had to resign due to health problems. Ms. Douoguih said the NCDN members were supportive of the search for his permanent replacement. In the interim, NCDN members will be drafting a local business handbook that will assist potential entrepreneurs with such issues as local zoning regulations, etc. Chair Maxwell said the Economic Development Subcommittee has warned a meeting for this Thursday night (10/14/21) at 6:00 p.m. in order to further discuss the EDD position and other matters. Ms. Douoguih said NCDN members would be willing to provide assistance to the municipality while the EDD position is vacant. The influx of the aforementioned local recovery funds (and decisions regarding their distribution) makes it important that local economic growth remains a significant consideration in the coming months.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of October 26, 2021.